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EXAMINER

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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte GARY COLE

Appeal 2009-004443
Application 10/006,089¹
Technology Center 2100

Before JOHN A. JEFFERY, LEE E. BARRETT, and THU A. DANG,
Administrative Patent Judges.

BARRETT, *Administrative Patent Judge.*

DECISION ON APPEAL²

This is a decision on appeal under 35 U.S.C. § 134(a) from the final rejection of claims 1-4, 6, 8-12, and 14-33. Claims 5, 7, and 13 have been canceled. We have jurisdiction pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 6(b).

We affirm-in-part.

¹ Filed December 6, 2001, titled "System and Method for Managing Information Objects." The real party in interest is Sun Microsystems, Inc.

² The two-month time period for filing an appeal or commencing a civil action, as recited in 37 C.F.R. § 1.304, or for filing a request for rehearing, as recited in 37 C.F.R. § 41.52, begins to run from the "MAIL DATE" (paper delivery mode) or the "NOTIFICATION DATE" (electronic delivery mode) shown on the PTOL-90A cover letter attached to this decision.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The invention

The invention relates to managing information on a network using an "identity index." The identity index can maintain a "virtual identity" for each user, the virtual identity comprising a list of information objects (e.g., user accounts) associated with the user and the identities of resources at which the information objects can be found. The identity index can also maintain a "resource definition" for each identified resource. Based on the resource definition and the information object identifier the invention can connect to each resource and locate the information objects on those resources. *See Abstract.*

Illustrative claim

Claim 1 is reproduced below for illustration:

1. A system for managing information, comprising:
 - a software program stored on a computer-readable medium operable to maintain an identity index, wherein said identity index comprises:
 - a virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources, further comprising:
 - a plurality of information object identifiers each corresponding to a respective information object;
and
 - for each information object, a resource name identifying one of the multiple computer resources at which

said respective information object is located,
wherein said resource name is associated with said
respective information object identifier; and

a resource definition corresponding to each respective said
named computer resource, wherein the resource
definition further comprises connection information.

The references

Hoover	5,724,575	Mar. 3, 1998
Dutcher	US 6,269,405 B1	Jul. 31, 2001 (filed Oct. 19, 1998)

The rejection

Claims 1-4, 6, 8-12, and 14-33 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.
§ 103(a) as unpatentable over Hoover and Dutcher.

DISCUSSION

Claims 1-4, 6, 16, 20, 21, 26-29 and 31-33

The rejection

The Examiner finds that Hoover teaches the limitations of claim 1 except that "Hoover does not expressly disclose that the virtual identity is 'for a user of multiple computer resources.'" Final Office Action (FOA) 3. The Examiner concludes that "[o]ne of ordinary skill in the art could apply the teachings of Hoover, with predictable results, to the user accounts of those who operate the multiple computer resources." *Id.* The Examiner finds that "Dutcher describes a need for managing different user accounts on

multiple, heterogeneous computer resources based on a single user account definition," *id.*, and concludes that it would have been obvious "to implement the teachings of Hoover such that the virtual identity is 'for a user of multiple computer resources,' as Dutcher suggests." *Id.* at 4. The Examiner finds that the map table in Figure 7 of Hoover corresponds to an "identity index" where the object identifiers in Hoover correspond to the claimed "information object identifiers" and the "location" entries for each object identifier correspond to "a resource name identifying one of the multiple computer resources." *Id.*

Issue

Does the combination of Hoover and Dutcher teach or suggest "a virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources" as recited in independent claim 1?

Independent claims 20 and 26 are not separately argued and therefore stand or fall together with claim 1. *See* 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(vii).

Principles of law

"[T]he test [for obviousness] is what the combined teachings of the references would have suggested to those of ordinary skill in the art." *In re Keller*, 642 F.2d 413, 425 (CCPA 1981).

Findings of fact

Hoover

Hoover relates to an object-oriented database system that transforms data in a plurality of remote, possibly heterogeneous user database structures into a homogeneous data model in a centralized object broker for object management thereby facilitating location and retrieval of data items from the remote, heterogeneous user databases. Col. 1, ll. 9-18.

Hoover describes the application of the distributed database to the health care industry. Col. 2.

Figure 6 shows the relationship between the object broker and the remote databases maintained at the client sites. Col. 21, ll. 63-65. The object broker maintains a map table 120, which "stores information relating particular object identifiers that have been assigned to particular instances of objects, to locations of data relating to those objects at the various remote databases RDBn." Col. 23, ll. 9-12.

Each user computer stores and maintains a plurality of object attribute tables (OAT) and OAT indexes for each corresponding attribute table, where "[e]ach object attribute table 140 relates predetermined objects and attributes of objects to predetermined data fields or data items stored in customer databases." Col. 23, ll. 55-58.

The map table 120 is shown in Figure 7 and maps an object identifier (OBJID) to a remote database (RDB) location. Col. 24, l. 36 - col. 25, l. 20.

Hoover teaches that an "add_PERSON" message may be used to add an instance of a person, where the message has a security parameter

"MyPassword" which "indicates a security password for the user initiating the operation, which of course is unrelated to information associated with the person whose demographics are being added." Col. 29, ll. 54-57.

Dutcher

Dutcher describes that user management in heterogeneous networks requires the creation of different user accounts on the different types of servers. Col. 1, ll. 37-41. "These user accounts eventually have different passwords and possibly different user I.D.'s. A mechanism is needed to allow a single user account definition to be used as the basis for any additional user accounts that exist in the network." Col. 1, ll. 41-45.

Analysis

Appellant argues that Hoover in view of Dutcher does not teach or suggest an "identity matrix" which includes "a virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources" which includes "a plurality of information object identifiers each corresponding to a respective information object; and for each information object, a resource name identifying one of the multiple computer resources at which said respective information object is located," as recited in claim 1. Br. 11. It is argued that Hoover describes data about people (e.g., patient health care information), not a virtual identity "for a user of multiple computer resources" (claim 1) including a resource name identifying one of the multiple computer resources. Br. 12. That is, "Hoover specifically states that the users of the databases are not the people whose information is stored in the databases." Br. 12 (bolding omitted).

The Examiner responds:

Hoover does not explicitly disclose Appellant's intended use of the virtual identity as "for a user of [the] multiple computer resources." Importantly, however, Hoover teaches each and every structural element recited in claim 1. The structure described in Hoover is capable of providing a virtual identity that is "for a user of [the] multiple computer resources."

Ans. 17 (emphasis added). The Examiner states that the "add-PERSON" message at column 29, lines 46-57 of Hoover "does not imply that Hoover is incapable of providing a virtual identity "for a user of [the] multiple computer resources.'" *Id.* at 18 (emphasis added). The Examiner states that "[t]he use of an administrative password does not preclude or prevent one from employing the virtual identity system of Hoover to store information about the actual users of the computer resources." *Id.* (emphasis added). The Examiner still further states that "the claimed subject matter differs from Hoover only in the terms of the 'content' of the information objects." *Id.* at 20; *see also* Ans. 21.

In summary, Appellant argues that the users of the databases in Hoover are not the people whose information is stored in the database. The Examiner's response is that the limitation "for a user of multiple computer resources" is a statement of intended use or, alternatively, that the content of the identity index is non-functional descriptive information and that the table structure in Hoover is "capable of" storing any kind of user data.

As a matter of claim interpretation, the term "virtual identity" is defined as "comprising" information object identifiers for each information

object and a resource name for each information object. Appellant does not appear to dispute that the "object identifiers" in the first column of Figure 7 of Hoover can be considered to correspond to "information object identifiers" and that the "location" names in the last column of Figure 7 correspond to a "resource name." The term "virtual identity" does not imply to us any specific additional limitations and, thus, it is not necessary to consider the Examiner's position regarding intended use and non-functional descriptive information. Limitations will not be read into the claims from the specification. For example, claim 1 does not recite that the "virtual identity" is a collection of data that represents a single entity, such as a user. (While independent claim 26 is more specific in reciting "an identity index comprising a plurality of information object identifiers corresponding to a set of information objects that define a user of multiple computer resources," claim 26 is not separately argued and we do not decide whether this difference in language is sufficient to define over Hoover. *See* 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(vii).) A "virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources" can be a "virtual identity" of a system for any user of multiple computer resources. A user of the system in Hoover is "a user of multiple computer resources" because there are multiple computer resources in Hoover as indicated by the remote databases RDB1-RDB4 in Figures 1 and 7 and because the user uses those resources.

We agree with Appellant that the map table in Figure 7 does not store data about the user of the multiple computer resources, but "a virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources" does not recite such a limitation.

Claim 1 only requires an identity that can be used by any user, i.e., a virtual identity "for" a user, not "of" a user. (Again, compare unargued independent claim 26, which recites that the identity index defines a user.)

Based on the broadest reasonable interpretation of claim 1, we conclude that claim 1 would have been obvious over Hoover alone.

Conclusion

The combination of Hoover and Dutcher suggests "a virtual identity for a user of multiple computer resources" as recited in independent claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 1, and the rejection of claims 2-4, 6, 16, 20, 21, 26-29 and 31-33 which are not separately argued, is affirmed.

Claims 8-12, 14, 15, 22-25, and 30

Appellant argues that the combination of Hoover and Dutcher does not teach or suggest that "the information object comprises a user account" as recited in claim 8. Br. 18. Claims 22 and 30 also recite a "user account."

The Examiner refers to column 27, lines 34-49 of Hoover which teaches that the PERSON object attributes includes personal information about the person (e.g., name, birthdate, marital status, address, etc.) which may indicate a user account with an insurance company. FOA 5-6.

Appellant argues that this again confuses healthcare information about a person with user account information. Br. 19. It is argued that Hoover's teaching that security parameter "MyPassword" in the "add-PERSON" message "indicates a security password for the user initiating the operation, which of course is unrelated to information associated with the person whose

demographics are being added" (Hoover, col. 29, ll. 54-57), so the information stored in databases is unrelated to users of the database. Br. 19.

As noted in the claim interpretation of claim 1, claim 1 recites a virtual identity "for" a user and does not define the "virtual identity" as a collection of data that represents a single entity. The security parameter (e.g., MyPassword) in Hoover is sent to a remote database which verifies that the user that initiated the request is permitted access (Hoover, col. 29, l. 66 to col. 30, l. 4), so it appears that one information object on one of the resources must include the security parameter, which corresponds to a user account "for" a user of the system. In addition, Dutcher indicates that user management in heterogeneous networks requires the creation of different user accounts on the different types of servers (col. 1, ll. 37-41) and that a "mechanism is needed to allow a single user account definition to be used as the basis for any additional user accounts that exist in the network." Col. 1, ll. 41-45. Therefore, Dutcher reasonably suggests that information objects on the heterogeneous resources include "user account" information for the "user" of the computer resources. Accordingly, we conclude that it would have been obvious for an information object to include a "user account" for a user. The rejection of claims 8-12, 14, 15, 22-25, and 30 is affirmed.

Claims 17-19

Dependent claim 17 recites "wherein said resource definition further comprises a schema map and wherein said software program is operable to create a composite view of said virtual identity based on said schema map."

The Examiner finds that the "mapping" of data described at column 27, lines 11-14 of Hoover teaches that the resource definition comprises a schema map, and that the "cross server join" described at column 25, lines 20-35 is creating a "composite view of said virtual identity based on said schema map" in claim 17. FOA 7; Ans. 24.

Appellant argues that column 25 does not involve creating a composite view of a "virtual identity" as claimed, but only teaches a "cross server join" to gather various pieces of information about a person whose healthcare information is stored across Hoover's distributed databases. Br. 20.

It is not clear that Hoover fairly meets the limitations of claim 17. Column 27 of Hoover describes that the object attribute tables 140 in a user computer are the result of "mapping" data. It may be that this mapping is a "schema map," however, the attributes tables are on the user computer and not part of a "resource definition" which is part of the claimed "identify index." In addition, the object attribute tables, e.g. in Figure 9, do not contain a "resource name" for each object identifier, which is inconsistent with the definition of a "virtual identity" in claim 1. Accordingly, Hoover does not satisfy the limitations of claim 17. The rejection of claim 17 and dependent claims 18 and 19 is reversed.

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CONCLUSION

The rejection of claims 1-4, 6, 8-12, 14-16 and 20-33 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is affirmed.

The rejection of claims 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is reversed.

Requests for extensions of time are governed by 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(b).
See 37 C.F.R. § 41.50(f).

AFFIRMED-IN-PART

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